

# Temporary Tattoos



## Decal type temporary tattoos

Decal type temporary tattoos are moistened and applied to the skin. These fade within a few days after application or can be washed off. Most of these temporary decals contain color additives that are approved for use on the skin by the FDA. There are some decals which have become the subject of an FDA import alert due to a lack of required ingredient information or because they contain colors not allowed by the FDA. (For more information visit [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov))

## Henna/Mehndi Tattoos

Henna is a dye produced from the plant *Lawsonia Inermis* that grows perennially in North Africa, Asia and Australia. The plant is dried and crushed to create henna powder. The powder is then mixed with lemon juice or natural oils to create a paste, which is used to stain the skin. The henna tattoo should last 1–2 weeks with gradual fading throughout the period. Henna tattoos applied to the hands or feet will last longer than those applied to body areas with softer skin.



Very few problems have been reported with true henna tattoos. However, many, many problems have been reported from people receiving so-called “black henna” tattoos. Pure henna produces a reddish brown stain on the hands and feet, and is usually a lighter shade on other parts of the body. To obtain a darker stain than pure henna provides, a toxic chemical dye known as p-phenylenediamine (PPD) is often added. PPD and other similar ingredients can cause reactions ranging from an itchy rash to blisters, sores, and permanent scarring.

## Safety Precautions

If you do decide to receive a henna tattoo, these are some safety precautions to keep in mind.

- Ask to see a list of ingredients, and avoid dyes with PPD, or Bigen (a product containing PPD).
- Ask what color it will produce. Avoid henna tattoos that will produce anything besides a reddish-brown stain.
- Ask to see the paste. Natural henna is greenish and smells like hay bale or like spinach. Avoid paste that appears too dark.
- Ask how long it takes to stain. Real henna takes 6–12 hours to stain properly; avoid dyes that will stain in shorter amounts of time.
- Avoid henna tattoos that are predicted to last longer than 1 to 2 weeks – they probably contain PPD or similar chemicals.

For more information on tattoo and body piercing visit:  
[www.milwaukee.gov/bodyart](http://www.milwaukee.gov/bodyart)

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